

REMARKS

This Amendment is responsive to the Office Action mailed Sept. 8, 2004. Claims 1 and 2 were pending the Office Action rejected both claims. Specifically, Claim 1 and 2 were rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting in view of Claims 16 and 22 of U.S. Patent No. 6,181,707. In response, the applicants' attorney of record has submitted a terminal disclaimer herewith.

In addition, Claims 1 and 2 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 (e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,069,878 ('878 patent). The applicants note that the '878 patent is a continuation of U.S. Patent No. 5,483,528, which is discussed in the Background of the Invention section of the present application. As discussed in the Background section, the '878 patent discloses a TDM-based intercom system which utilizes a central controller to control the network. In contrast, the present invention discloses a distributed processing system in which each station has its own processor, thereby eliminating a central processing bottleneck, and improving system performance. In addition, the TDM bus is utilized to provide inter-processor control message communication among the various stations. Such an application is not taught or suggested by the '878 patent.

Claims 1 and 2 have been amended to include these unique features of the present invention that are not taught by the '878 patent, namely, that the bus transports inter-processor communication messages, and that no central processor controls the data communications of the system – in contrast to the system of the '878 patent.

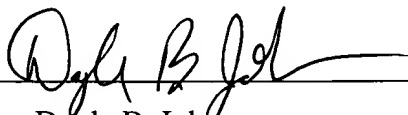
As such, it is now believed that the Claims are in condition for allowance.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees (or credit any overpayment) associated with this communication and which may be required under 37 CFR §1.78 to Deposit Account No. 50-2603, **referencing Attorney Docket No. 350583.00111. A duplicate sheet is attached.**

Respectfully submitted,

REED SMITH LLP

Dated: February 8, 2005

By: 

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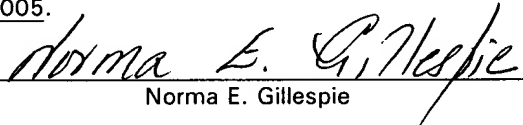
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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner for Patents, US Patent & Trademark Office, P.O. Box 1450 Alexandria, VA 22313 on February 8, 2005.

Dated: February 8, 2005


Norma E. Gillespie